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Accelerating the Transition to Sustainable Development

Discussion Highlights from two Symposia:

Planning and Decision-making for Sustainable Development (October 1993)

and

Multistakeholder Approaches for Sustainable Development (February 1993)

The International Development Research Centre

Le Centre de recherches pour le développement international

El Centro Internacional de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo

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Convened by the International Development Research Centre, in cooperation with the Institute for Research on Public Policy
International Institute for Sustainable Development
Stockholm Environment Institute
World Conservation Union
Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries
National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy

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Foreword

When the Prime Minister announced Canada's support for, and commitment to, Agenda 21 at the 1992 Earth Summit (UNCED — United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development), he stressed that IDRC would be a lead organization in its implementation. He also reinforced the role that IDRC is to play in contributing to sustainable and equitable development.

For most people, no matter from what sphere of endeavour, the structure and complexity of Agenda 21 has created confusion and concern — more players, a multiplicity of cross-sector challenges, new conditionalities, and new processes. Although it will take much goodwill, time, and patience to address these challenges effectively, it is clear that a multisectoral approach will be essential. Planning for sustainable development must be supported by some sort of multistakeholder mechanism to help make decisions.

Canada has started to amass considerable and important experience in addressing these multisectoral and multistakeholder challenges. Since the publication of *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) in 1987, all of Canada's provinces and territories, the federal government, and many municipalities have set up roundtables on the environment and the economy. Although there is no common template for the structure and scope of these roundtables, they do share one common trait — they bring together senior decision-makers from the private sector, the environment community, academe, and the government.

In February 1993, several Permanent Secretaries or their equivalent and a number of leaders of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutes from the South joined their Canadian counterparts at an IDRC symposium. The participants examined the lessons learned from Canadian roundtables and similar multistakeholder initiatives and assessed, in a preliminary way, their relevance and potential to increase indigenous capacity for sustainable development.

There are many areas of concern with the evolving Agenda 21 processes. Several participants from the South expressed their concern that insufficient attention was being given to institutional mechanisms that could integrate environment and development ministries into the process of making decisions about sustainable development. Others suggested that donor agencies might be placing too much emphasis on the speed of preparing national plans and devoting too little attention to institution building. Yet others were concerned that donors

would have different requirements for implementing Agenda 21 and would place additional strains on an already overworked public service.

Building on these types of concerns, IDRC convened a second symposium in October 1993. A representative group of senior national environment and development decision-makers from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean presented case studies of their particular national processes and concerns. These case studies were followed by presentations from several decision-makers and advisors on the role of international organizations. Discussion highlights of the key issues and questions addressed at this symposium are provided in Part I of this report. Part II reviews the February symposium.

The comments received both during and since these symposia make it clear that the presentations, observations, and discussions provided a rich menu of ideas and challenges. Far more time than the few hours available during the symposia is needed for their thorough discussion. These highlight reports are therefore neither a comprehensive nor definite response. They do, however, provide a basis for further reflection and detailed discussion. They also help point the way toward new approaches to planning and decision-making for sustainable development. These approaches must now be assessed against the "art of the possible" within the context of each nation's cultural and political realities.

Keith Bezanson
President, IDRC
April 1994

Part I: Planning and Decision-making for Sustainable Development (10–12 October 1993)

Introduction

The symposium included participants from Bolivia, China, Costa Rica, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Nepal, and Pakistan as well as from the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CACED), the Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA), the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IIRP), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the Organization of African States (OAS), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the World Resources Institute (WRI).

The first day of the symposium focused on national and regional experience in planning and decision-making for sustainable development in Africa, Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean. Some of that national experience is summarized in Appendix 1. This sharing of extensive national and international experience provided a common reference and anchor for subsequent exploratory discussions.

On the second day of the symposium the participants explored, and attempted to define, some of the main elements needed for effective national strategies and for plans for sustainable development. They paid special attention to more participatory approaches to planning and decision-making. This summary highlights the main points raised in the discussions. The points are presented according to the key issues and questions addressed.

Immediately following the symposium, the participants joined top development officials and environment experts from 18 OECD countries and key international organizations at an OECD workshop on National Plans for Sustainable Development held in Ottawa from 13 to 15 October. The OECD workshop focused on: (1) country approaches to the design and implementation of national plans for sustainable development; and (2) external assistance and local ownership. At the beginning of the OECD workshop, the most relevant key points raised during the IDRC symposium were presented.

Challenges in Implementing Agenda 21

Most top decision-makers in the public and private sectors do not have copies of Agenda 21. For those that do, a major challenge is coping with its sheer size and scope. The official text of Agenda 21 contains about 180 000 words and is nearly 500 pages long. It includes over 2 500 recommendations for national, regional, and global action categorized according to 40 main issues and over 120 program areas.

For top decision-makers and planners, Agenda 21 is more a comprehensive catalogue and guide than a coherent plan of action. It does not set priorities for action or specify how best to implement many of the recommendations.

The text of Agenda 21 is often difficult to understand for those who were not directly involved in the 1992 Earth Summit negotiations. Some of the underlying concepts and assumptions are unclear. On contentious issues, the diplomatic language is intentionally ambiguous.

These and other factors have led to difficulties and even some confusion in the interpretation and implementation of Agenda 21. Different national and international agencies emphasize different aspects and have sometimes set different and even competing priorities for action.

Nevertheless, Agenda 21 is a formidable achievement. It is the first global agenda for action to integrate environment and development. Every recommendation was negotiated and approved by the leaders and representatives of over 170 countries. It has political legitimacy. It now needs far greater political commitment to be implemented within and among all countries.

A major risk is that Agenda 21 will be implemented on a narrowly selective or piecemeal basis. Agenda 21 represents a new approach to tackling the main environment and development challenges. It is not merely a shopping list. It is clear that environmental agencies must be strengthened, but this will be inadequate unless accompanied by changes in the major economic and sectoral policies of unsustainable development.

The successful implementation of Agenda 21 will require a series of interlinked policy, institutional, and legal changes within and among all countries. It will require changes not only in the content of development plans but in the planning process itself. Successful implementation will especially require the use of more participatory approaches to planning. These approaches must involve the key stakeholders in society. It is their support and participation that will be needed to implement new plans more quickly and effectively.

The Agenda 21 planning and implementation processes must also avoid domination by hard-line ecologists or economists. Neither have a monopoly on the truth or the key to a sustainable future. The likely environmental impacts of economic activities must be assessed; but so too must the likely economic impacts of environmental measures. Moreover, given the growing gap between the rich and poor both among and within most countries, the likely equity impacts of both

economic and environmental measures must be assessed. All three assessments are needed to ensure that major policies, programs, and projects support sustainable development.

Lessons Learned During the Preparation of Previous Plans

High-level and continuous political support at the national and even local levels is essential to the success of new strategies and plans for sustainable development. National plans should be based on the best available information on the state of the environment and stock of natural resources. The lack of adequate information in some areas should not be used as an excuse for excessive delays in planning or decision-making. Not taking any action can later become more expensive than taking at least some preventive or remedial action immediately.

A "best informed judgement" approach that involves a representative group of top officials, experts, and key stakeholders can be used until more detailed information is obtained through further research. For example, the Seychelles adopted this approach when preparing its National Development Plan for 1990–1994 and the linked Environmental Management Plan and Investment Program for 1990–2000.

More use should be made of local and indigenous knowledge and skills. This has too often been ignored or marginalized by outside experts who do not know the local language or culture. Greater use of local knowledge and skills can lead to more practical and affordable solutions. It can also help avoid expensive mistakes.

When preparing new plans, the past is no longer a reliable guide to the future. The 1980s were largely an unsustainable development decade for many developing countries. New strategies, policies, and approaches are therefore needed at both the national and international levels. Previous plans too often focused on physical symptoms and react-and-cure approaches rather than on the identification of policies that had led to unsustainable development and the development of more anticipate-and-prevent strategies.

The planning process should involve the key institutions and other major stakeholders in a society. Their support and cooperation will be needed to implement the plan effectively. National plans have frequently been delayed or stopped by changes in government. With wider participatory approaches to planning, new governments will be more willing to continue plans that clearly enjoy broad public support. Public information on new plans has been too often left until the end. It should instead be an integral part of the planning process from the start.

Plans by small groups of experts or consultants can be prepared quickly, but they are rarely implemented. These proposals for action usually lack broad understanding and support. The plan must subsequently be sold to, or imposed

on, the key institutions and stakeholders that are needed to make it work. This approach is rarely successful.

Public participation should be built into the planning process from the outset. Public consultations on a nearly completed plan provide too few opportunities for dialogue too late in the process. Often the result is disagreements that are too late to fix or acquiescence that lacks any real commitment.

Institutional weaknesses are major constraints to the preparation and implementation of national plans in many countries. Although always sensitive to discuss, these constraints must be addressed and remedies found to ensure more efficient and effective use of limited staff and budgetary resources. The mandate to lead or coordinate the preparation of the plan or the implementation processes should be based on competence instead of traditional institutional prerogatives.

International aid agencies who could provide relevant technical assistance and financial support should also be consulted during the planning process. However, some national plans, especially those prepared with extensive assistance from external experts, have given too much attention to donor priorities and preferences. Even when prepared by local experts, the coherence and integrity of national plans have often been undermined by donor funding that supports selected parts at the expense of the overall strategy.

Greater clarity and precision are needed when defining the goals and scope of different but often related strategies and plans (for example, national conservation strategies, environmental action plans, biodiversity strategies, and desertification control plans). Their different imperatives, lead agencies, key stakeholders, and target groups should be clearly identified. Clear distinctions should also be made and maintained between different types of plans to avoid confusion or false expectations (for example, the mislabelling of a plan for environmental action as a plan for sustainable development).

New national and local plans should build on previous plans and create links to relevant plans in other sectors. Time and limited staff and financial resources are often squandered when new plans ignore or attempt to sideline other relevant plans. New plans should set clear goals, timetables, and targets. More effective methods and measures are needed to monitor, assess, and report on progress made toward achieving the goals and targets set in the plan. Special provisions should be made to adapt the plan when faced with significantly new information or circumstances.

The estimated costs and benefits of implementing the plan should be spelled out clearly. The estimated costs of not implementing key proposals should also be specified (for example, health and other damage costs and lost jobs and revenue because of overexploitation of a resource). Plans must also address the issue of who benefits. For example, new proposals to expand national parks and protect wildlife to earn greater foreign exchange through ecotourism will eventually fail if the local, and often poor, communities bear most of the costs (for example, crop damage from wildlife) but receive little or no benefit.

More realistic incentives and disincentives are needed to avoid the unsustainable use of key resources such as forests and water. However, special programs and even subsidies will be needed to support environmentally sound alternatives for the poor. If the use of a resource is free (for example, fuelwood) then all other options are more expensive, and frequently too expensive, for the poor. Special measures are needed to ensure that new environmental regulations or procedures for environmental assessment do not provide new opportunities for corruption and simply let violators buy their way out.

National plans must take into account the influence of key international factors such as foreign trade, investment, debt, and aid. Unfavourable terms of trade, rising debt payments, and stagnating or declining aid were major contributors to unsustainable development in many developing countries during the 1980s. Changes are needed in international economic arrangements to avoid the perpetuation of this situation throughout the 1990s.

National planners must increasingly take into account the likely environmental impact of their own proposals on other countries. Subregional problems and international cooperation in the management and use of shared natural resources should receive special attention.

Main Characteristics of Strategies for Sustainable Development

A strategy for sustainable development is essentially a process of managed change that focuses and mobilizes a society toward sustainable development. This strategy should be based on a participatory approach that involves the key stakeholders in the society. Although women often dominate agriculture and the large informal sector in many countries and youth often represent half or more of the population and have the greatest stake in reversing unsustainable development, neither women nor youth are generally involved in the preparation or implementation of development plans.

A strategy for sustainable development goes beyond the standard pollution control agenda and end-of-pipe solutions to identify and attack the root causes of environmental degradation. It should identify the key policy levers and institutional changes needed to integrate environment and social considerations into all economic and sectoral plans and decision-making.

In the economic sphere, this entails making fiscal and structural policies consistent with the pursuit of the objectives of sustainable development. Policies to increase investment, raise productivity, and stimulate entrepreneurship, as well as those to promote technology transfer and build international comparative advantage, must be based on a strategy for sustainable development. This strategy should also identify ecologically destructive subsidies and tax policies and seek to internalize the environmental costs of production in line with the OECD "Polluter Pays Principle." This is essential if international trade is to support sustainable development.

A strategy for sustainable development should assess and specify the costs of implementation. Equally important, it should identify and quantify the ecological and economic savings of its implementation (for example, damage costs avoided, improved worker health and productivity, energy savings, and reduced waste and disposal costs).

Realistic estimates of the short- and long-term costs and benefits of strategies for sustainable development should be prepared for enterprises, cities, regions, and the nation. These strategies should build on existing national initiatives such as environmental action plans, biodiversity strategies, and conservation strategies, rather than seek to supplant them.

Need for a Larger and Longer-term Vision

Sustainable development transcends short-term interests and generations to embrace a larger and longer-term vision of development. As defined by the Brundtland Commission, it is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainable development requires a larger and longer-term vision as a framework and inspiration for local, national, and even international action. Without such a vision of a win–win future for all stakeholders and their children, local or short-term win–lose conflicts will likely dominate and delay the transition to sustainable development. As well, short-term political expediency and election cycles will likely prevail and possibly derail the transition toward sustainable development.

Participatory approaches can help create a national vision, shared by all stakeholders, of moving toward sustainable development. The process can release the energies of the stakeholders and direct them toward common goals. It can also help resolve conflicts that impede progress.

A participatory process of negotiation and consensus building should focus on what is required to achieve the larger and longer-term vision. It should identify key issues, priorities for action, and the main policy and institutional levers for change. As the key stakeholders define their common future, the process itself can make a major contribution to building mutual confidence and commitment among the stakeholders.

Main Characteristics of Multistakeholder Approaches

A multistakeholder approach involves all key groups in a community or society whose interests may be affected by the issues to be addressed or by the likely solutions. This approach should especially involve those who have a direct stake in finding a fair and effective solution (for example, the national, provincial, and local roundtables for sustainable development in Canada).

A multistakeholder group is not a policy-making body although it usually includes policymakers from the public and private sectors. However, it does provide a useful and often unique forum to explore, test, and influence policy change.

A multistakeholder approach should be inclusive rather than exclusive. The approach should be a true partnership. No groups should be dominant or subordinate. To succeed it must be a partnership on equal terms with shared responsibility, shared ownership, and shared control of the process.

A multistakeholder approach should not have any predetermined agenda. The first tasks of a multistakeholder group are to set together their own agenda, priorities, and timetable. The approach should gradually build trust and confidence among the partners as a basis for moving toward a common agenda, common priorities, and common action. They should not be driven by the need to produce a plan. They should focus on achieving cooperative agreements for change. The approach should also tap and make more effective use of local and indigenous knowledge and skills and should itself be a capacity-building process.

Agreements Between Donor and Host Countries on Participatory Approaches

Participatory approaches must be sustained and strengthened until they become an accepted and effective part of planning and decision-making. This will require a continuity of commitment and engagement by high-level officials, key stakeholders, and donors.

The integrity and self-reliance of participatory approaches are crucially important. External support is nevertheless needed to ensure a reliable and long-term flow of funds to maintain participatory processes until they are fully accepted and internalized. External support can also ensure the effective implementation of the proposals that emerge.

External support should be the subject of a special compact among the parties. Key features should include the streamlining of funding, the building of local self reliance, and the development of an evolving and adaptive participatory process. The compact should also include commitments to build on existing initiatives and processes, to redirect funding to activities that support sustainable development, and to ensure sufficient and consistent financial and administrative support for the process and for the implementation of priorities as defined by the process.

The donor community and developing countries must intensify efforts to move toward mutual agreement on a set of common priorities for achieving sustainable development at the country level (for example, concise national strategy notes initiated by recipient countries) and at the regional and global levels. Mutually agreed criteria also need to be developed on accountability for the use of external funds and for the assessment of the effectiveness and progress

of participatory approaches. Consideration should be given to international multistakeholder approaches and roundtables on subregional, regional, and even global problems of environmental degradation (for example, climate change and desertification) or shared natural resources (for example, international water bodies).

Donor Support for Participatory Approaches to Planning and Decision-making

Donors should be cautious when setting new requirements or conditions for aid that they have not applied, or only partially fulfilled, in their own countries. For example, few OECD countries have prepared strategies for sustainable development or national versions of Agenda 21. Participatory and multistakeholder approaches are not yet prominent or consistent features of planning and decision-making in many OECD countries.

Donors should also help set an example when urging developing countries to make immediate and major changes in their national plans, policies, and programs. However, OECD countries have not yet seriously addressed the critical issue of unsustainable consumption patterns in their own countries. Moreover, few OECD countries have increased their development aid, reoriented their trade policies, or taken significant steps to reduce the debt burden of developing countries as was agreed at the 1992 Earth Summit.

The debt burden and payments to service debts are increasingly unsustainable in many developing countries. They severely constrain the pace and scale of the transition to sustainable development and undermine long-term sustainability. The impact of structural adjustment policies, especially on social and ecological sustainability, needs to be thoroughly assessed. The major economic and sectoral units in key multilateral agencies and financial institutions should be made responsible and accountable for ensuring that their programs and projects support development that is sustainable.

Developing countries are moving toward more participatory planning and decision-making processes, especially for plans and strategies for the environment and sustainable development. For example, many developing countries held wide-ranging public consultations as part of their national preparations and follow-up for the 1992 Earth Summit.

The donor community can encourage and support more participatory approaches to planning and decision-making for sustainable development by making changes in some of their approaches and practices. For example, target dates and time frames for preparing plans or completing projects are often too short to allow for participatory processes. The extensive use of foreign experts precludes or inhibits participatory processes because these experts frequently do not know the local languages or customs. The disproportionate emphasis on

projects and products rather than participatory processes also needs to be addressed.

Aid programs should make far greater use of the expertise in recipient or neighbouring countries. If local expertise is lacking, donors should help establish special capacity-building programs to provide training.

As developing countries move toward more participatory approaches, donor policies and practices should increasingly support and reinforce the process and the resulting priorities, plans, and strategies. At present, however, national plans, planning capabilities, and processes are often overtaken by different and frequently competing donor priorities and preferences. The limited planning capacity in many countries is increasingly overwhelmed by rising demands for a wide variety of new and sometimes competing plans and strategies (for example, biodiversity, national Agenda 21 plans, conservation strategies, environmental action plans, and country profiles) as well as by escalating donor requirements for different project information and reports. Renewed efforts are needed to improve donor consultations and cooperation with recipient countries. These efforts must meet the priorities set by the recipient country for making effective use of limited domestic and external resources.

International environmental agreements should include special capacity-building provisions to ensure that there is sufficient legal expertise in developing countries to fulfill their new international obligations. The budgets for some aid projects dominate or even exceed the entire budget of a national planning or environment agency. This can distort priorities and divert both attention and expertise from other priority issues or overall strategies.

More participatory approaches lead to plans and strategies that enjoy wider public involvement and support and can be more readily and effectively implemented. However, this raises an immediate concern. Urgent remedies are needed for many environment and development problems, but new strategies using participatory approaches will take longer to prepare. These strategies will also place even greater demands on the limited planning capabilities and processes in most developing countries.

Special attention therefore needs to be given to the mobilization of funds, to alternative sources of funding, and to the creation of innovative funding mechanisms that support participatory approaches to the preparation and implementation of national and local plans and strategies to accelerate the transition to sustainable development. Many developing countries have already acquired considerable experience in the preparation and implementation of a wide variety of national strategies and plans for moving toward sustainable development. Special international programs are now needed to ensure that the experience and the lessons learned are shared with other developing countries. Some of that experience could also benefit their partners in developed countries.

Appendix 1
Environment and Sustainable Development: Plans and Situation

A questionnaire on planning and decision-making for sustainable development was sent to all participants before the symposium. Replies were submitted for the Central American Commission for Environment and Development, Costa Rica, Ghana, India, Kenya, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe. The information is summarized in Table 1. The abbreviations used are:

CCAD	Central American Commission on Environment and Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
EC	European Community
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
Env	Environment, including conservation of nature and natural resources
Env/Dev	Environment and development issues
Env agency	National agency responsible for environmental management
GEF	Global Environment Facility (World Bank/UNDP/UNEP)
Govt	Government(s)
Integ	Integrated
IUCN	World Conservation Union
NCS	National Conservation Strategy
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NGOs	Nongovernmental organizations
ODA	Overseas Development Agency (UK)
Plan agency	National agency responsible for planning and development
SD	Sustainable development
SOE	State of the Environment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WWF	World-wide Fund for Nature

Table 1. Planning and decision-making for sustainable development.

A.	**PLAN FEATURES**	**Central America**	**Costa Rica**	**Ghana**	**India**	**Kenya**	**Pakistan**	**Zimbabwe**	**Zimbabwe**
01	Type	SD strategy	NCS	NEAP	NEAP	SD plan	NCS	NCS	SD plan
02	Duration	1991 +	1989 +	1993-2002	1992 +	1994-1996	1993-1998	1987 +	1993 +
03	Scope	Env/Dev	Env	Env/Dev	Env/Dev	Env/Dev	Env/Dev	Env	Env/Dev
04	Implementation cost	-	-	$36 million	-	-	$648 million	-	-
05	Sets national goals?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
06	Sets specific targets?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
07	Sets project priorities?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
08	Sets detailed timetable?	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
09	Identifies lead agencies?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
10	Assesses costs/benefits?	No	No	Yes	No	No	Costs only	No	No
B.	**PLAN TIMETABLE**	**Central America**	**Costa Rica**	**Ghana**	**India**	**Kenya**	**Pakistan**	**Zimbabwe**	**Zimbabwe**
11	Planning started	June 1991	Apr 1987	Mar 1988	May 1992	Jan 1993	Apr 1992	Nov 1985	Nov 1992
12	Plan completed	June 1992	Sep 1989	Dec 1990	May 1992	Oct 1993	Dec 1992	Apr 1987	Mar 1993
13	Plan approved	June 1992	Oct 1989	June 1991	May 1992	Oct 1993	Jan 1993	Apr 1987	Mar 1993
14	Implementation started	June 1992	-	Mar 1993	-	Jan 1994	Jul 1993	Apr 1987	Mar 1993
15	Implementation completed	Open	-	June 2002	-	Dec 1996	Jun 1998	-	Open
C.	**PLAN PREPARATION**	**Central America**	**Costa Rica**	**Ghana**	**India**	**Kenya**	**Pakistan**	**Zimbabwe**	**Zimbabwe**
16	Plan initiator	CCAD	Env agency	Plan agency	UNDP	Plan agency	Env agency	Env agency	Env agency
17	External funding	USAID/UNDP	IUCN/WWF	World Bank	UNDP	UNDP	CIDA/ODA	None	UNDP
18	Lead government agency	CCAD	Env agency	Env agency	Env agency	Plan agency	Env agency	Env agency	Env agency
19	Steering Committee	Govt/NGOs	Govt/NGOs	Inter-Ministerial	Govt/NGOs	Inter-Ministerial	Inter-Ministerial	Govt/NGOs	Govt/NGOs
20	Largely local experts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
21	Public consultations	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
22	NGO consultations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
23	Donor consultations	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
24	Plan finalized by	Consultants	Env agency	Env agency	Env agency	Plan agency	Env agency	Env agency	Env agency
25	Plan approved by	CCAD Presidents	Env agency	Cabinet	Env agency	Cabinet	Govt Committee	President	Env agency

		Central	Costa						
D.	PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	America	Rica	Ghana	India	Kenya	Pakistan	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
26	Lead government agency	CCAD	-	Env agency	Env agency	Plan agency	Env agency	Env agency	Env agency
27	Steering Committee	Yes	-	Inter-Ministerial	No	Inter-Ministerial	Inter-Ministerial	Govt/NGOs	Govt/NGOs
28	External funds needed	-	-	$31 million	-	-	$648 million	-	-
29	External funds pledged	-	-	100%	-	-	7.2%	-	-
30	External funds paid	-	-	-	-	-	0.3%	-	-
31	Largest donor	-	-	World Bank/GEF	UNDP/WB	-	CIDA/World Bank/EC	CIDA	CIDA/UNDP
32	Progress monitored by	-	-	Govt/Donor Com	Env agency	Plan agency	Env agency	Env agency	Env agency
33	Progress on schedule	-	-	No	No	-	Yes	No	Yes

		Central	Costa						
E.	PRESENT SITUATION	America	Rica	Ghana	India	Kenya	Pakistan	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
34	Environmental monitoring	None	-	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	>	Inadequate
35	SOE reports by government	None	-	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	>	Inadequate
36	SOE reports by NGOs	Inadequate	-	None	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	>	Adequate
37	Environmental awareness	Adequate	-	Excellent	Inadequate	Adequate	Good	>	Adequate
38	EIA procedures	Inadequate	-	Good	-	Adequate	Inadequate	>	Inadequate
39	Env laws/standards	Inadequate	-	Good	Adequate	Inadequate	Adequate	>	Inadequate
40	Env law enforcement	Inadequate	-	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	>	Inadequate
41	Economic instruments	None	-	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	>	None
42	Government/industry coop	Inadequate	-	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	>	Adequate
43	Government/NGO coop	Adequate	-	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Good	>	Good
44	Government coordination	Adequate	-	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate	Good	>	Inadequate
45	Plan implementation	Adequate	-	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Good	>	Inadequate
46	Env integ in economic planning	None	-	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate	Good	>	Inadequate
47	Env integ in sectoral policies	Inadequate	-	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	>	None
48	Env integ in govt decisions	Inadequate	-	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate	>	Inadequate
49	Env integ in industry decisions	Inadequate	-	Adequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	>	Inadequate
50	Env integ in school curricula	Adequate	-	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate	>	Inadequate

Appendix 2
Participants

Asia

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Part II: Symposium on Multistakeholder Approaches for Sustainable Development (16–17 February 1993)

Introduction

This symposium examined the lessons learned from the Canadian roundtable processes and from similar multistakeholder initiatives. It also examined the relevance and potential of these processes to contribute to indigenous capacity-building in developing countries and to improve planning and decision-making for sustainable development.

Senior officials and practitioners from developing countries, including a number associated with previous IDRC-sponsored regional roundtables, joined their Canadian counterparts to identify and assess the procedural, process, and substantive aspects of Canadian and other multistakeholder approaches that might be adapted for use in other countries. The symposium concentrated on four themes.

(1) Multistakeholder Partnerships. An overview and assessment of the structures, mandates, and multistakeholder groups that evolved during the Canadian roundtable process at the national, provincial, and municipal levels as well as during similar fora in other countries (for example, Pakistan).

(2) Decision-making Tools. A review of the range of tools now available to assist decision-makers, with a special focus on environmental reporting, indicators, accounting, and economic instruments.

(3) Planning for Sustainable Development. A more detailed review of the Canadian GreenPlan process, the follow-on Projet de Société, and similar experiences in other countries (for example, Pakistan, Seychelles, and Zimbabwe).

(4) Decision-making for Sustainable Development. A concluding review of decision-making initiatives in the public and private sectors to promote and support sustainable development.

Implementing Agenda 21

Agenda 21 contains a formidable array of recommendations and proposals for moving toward sustainable development. However, it is unfortunately too long, too inscrutable, and too inaccessible for most decision-makers and the public. To reach a much wider audience, Agenda 21 needs to be summarized and reformulated in clearer language.

The implementation of Agenda 21 will require persistent political commitment and support at the highest level of government and international institutions. For success it will also require new local, national, regional, and global partnerships across traditional academic, institutional, sectoral, public and private, political, and jurisdictional boundaries.

National equivalents of Agenda 21 need to be prepared and implemented. However, policies, plans, and programs for sustainable development at the local to global levels will succeed only if they have the support and cooperation of at least the major stakeholders. The best way of ensuring this support is to give major stakeholders a greater voice and role in formulating the policies and plans. Multistakeholder consultations and partnerships are crucial to quick-start and fast-track the various societal and sectoral transitions to sustainable development from the local to the global level.

Theme I: Multistakeholder Partnerships

We can no longer afford to make mistakes. Therefore, the basis for, and participation in, decision-making must be broadened. There is too much reliance on governments to stimulate environmentally sound development. Other key stakeholders must be engaged. There is a need to reduce tensions and build bridges between groups interested in development and environment.

There is a limited number but wide variety of examples in different countries of multistakeholder approaches to environment and development issues. The most comprehensive and extensive programs to date have been the Canadian municipal, provincial, and national roundtables on the environment and the economy. Although there was no set formula for their creation or for the selection of members, they had several features in common:

- Each brought together top representatives of major stakeholder groups such as government, industry, labour, the scientific community, and NGOs;
- Each created their own agenda to reflect their different geographic, social, cultural, economic, and ecological realities;
- Each set their own work program, priorities, and timetable;
- Each set their own study and consultative processes;
- Each gradually developed a common information base; and

- Each adopted by consensus one or more public reports on their findings.

Roundtables help break down polarized positions and situations and break through barriers to dialogue and cooperation among key societal groups and stakeholders. Building bridges and trust among previous adversarial groups is an early feature and significant achievement of roundtables (for example, the national forestry dialogue in Canada).

In the early stages, roundtable meetings are often dominated by discussions on process rather than substance. This is both predictable and necessary. However, if too prolonged, some key members may drop out and weaken the process and its impact.

Roundtable members often join to influence policy change. Although roundtables are not policy-making groups, their membership often includes policy-makers from the public and private sectors. For this reason, roundtables provide a useful and often unique forum to explore and test the inevitable proposals that arise for policy change.

NGO members on roundtables get an opportunity to make their case directly to, and improve their credibility with, key decision-makers. However, NGOs also face special risks. They lose credibility with their own NGO members and colleagues if the discussions divert their attention and limited resources away from urgent problems. The costs of their participation are also relatively greater because their organizational budgets and staffing are limited. To be both fair and successful, multistakeholder processes should ensure that NGOs participate as equal partners and are not greatly outnumbered and overwhelmed by other groups.

To keep key members at the roundtable, tangible results must be achieved or anticipated. However, it is difficult to assess the full impact and effectiveness of multistakeholder process such as roundtables, and it is important to determine what criteria and measures can best be used for their assessment.

Roundtables help create greater public awareness and understanding of key issues. They are also instrumental in securing much wider societal support for new initiatives and policy changes because the members share and advocate the findings with their own groups and constituencies.

In developing countries, there are many important differences that must be taken into account in multistakeholder programs, including the level of education, literacy, and cultural differences. Key stakeholder groups also differ. If represented proportionally, some groups would need far greater numbers in multistakeholder processes and groups (for example, the poor, who are half or more of the population; youth, who also constitute over half the population; and women, who play a major role in food production and domestic fuelwood and water supply).

Canadian stakeholders, especially industry and NGOs, participated in the multistakeholder roundtables to influence change. In developing countries, some major stakeholders, especially industry and even key government agencies, do not

yet understand or accept the need for change. Basic environment and development problems and time frames also differ (for example, wasteful resource use versus poverty driven overuse of resources; overconsumption versus underconsumption; lifestyle choices versus survival imperatives; and preventing further degradation versus tackling the backlog of urgent problems).

Roundtables in Canada started as fully fledged multistakeholder groups. Many developing countries would likely have to proceed on a more gradual step-by-step basis. They would start with the most critical stakeholder groups (for example, other economic and sectoral agencies, parastatals, and levels of government) and then expand to involve others. Allowing for these important differences, the roundtable process with multistakeholders is generally replicable and desirable in other countries and even at the regional level (for example, for shared water resources like the Great Lakes or Lake Victoria).

The experience with consensus building and multistakeholder processes in other countries should be supported and extended (for example, traditional approaches in villages in Asia and Africa, the CampFire program in Zimbabwe, and the National Conservation Strategy in Pakistan). Consideration should also be given to a global roundtable to discuss how best to respond to, and manage, global economic and ecological changes. The Brundtland Commission was an innovative example of a global roundtable-type multistakeholder process. It is imperative to ensure that environmental concerns and actions in the North do not continue to contribute to environmental degradation in the South (for example, dumping of hazardous and other wastes in developing countries).

Theme II: Tools for Decision-making

It is important to consider the different characteristics and needs of key categories of decision-makers (for example, households and families, geographic and cultural communities, corporations, and governments). Better measures and indicators of sustainable development are also needed to make more realistic assessments and projections of the wealth and health of nations. Far greater attention must be given to accounting for long-term resource stocks rather than short-term resource flows (for example, sustainable GNP). As well, greater use and integration of environmental accounting and impact assessments is needed in the private sector. Multistakeholder involvement is needed to identify and apply sustainable development indicators, especially those that are not just quantitative measures but also reflect qualitative judgements and community values.

The use of environmental regulations and economic instruments needs to be improved. They are not separate options; they are linked approaches. Regulations can be applied without economic instruments, but the latter are ineffective without reasonable regulations. The regulatory approach needs to be strengthened by:

- Removing perverse regulations and subsidies in agriculture and energy that undermine sustainable development;
- Streamlining overlapping regulations and fragmented responsibilities that undercut effectiveness and accountability;
- Filling critical gaps in the regulatory framework; and
- Dropping unenforceable regulations and improving enforcement for the remaining regulations.

Compliance can be encouraged and reinforced by more extensive use of economic incentives and disincentives and by public recognition and awards for environmentally sound behaviour. A major problem is that too often those whose activities cause environmental problems are not held accountable and made responsible for their remediation. Accountability in government is especially too often diffuse and dispersed. Many agencies have overlapping mandates to be involved but have little or no power to act.

The full social, economic, and ecological costs should be reflected in the prices of public goods and services in at least the developed countries. With massive poverty in many developing countries, full-cost pricing for all is not an equitable or practical option. The acceptability and effectiveness of approaches based on regulations and economic instruments can be greatly improved by multistakeholder consultations and involvement in their design and implementation. Efforts must also be made to avoid the use or abuse of tools to postpone or avoid decision-making (for example, overelaborate or prolonged state-of-the-environmental assessments) or to preempt domestic decision-making (for example, the use of closed teams of expatriate consultants or excessive donor conditionality).

Theme III: Planning for Sustainable Development

So far there has been little or no multistakeholder planning in any field at any level in most countries. The scope of Agenda 21 demonstrates that because so many different sectors, agencies, and levels of government are involved, some kind of overall plan and framework for action is required. Priorities must be set to ensure the most effective use of limited time, money, and expertise. Political support and initiative is the crucial starting point. But, support and cooperation are needed from many different stakeholders.

No local or national plan for achieving sustainable development will succeed unless key stakeholders are involved in its preparation and are committed to its implementation. Several innovative examples were considered:

- The Canadian GreenPlan and Projet de Société;
- The Pakistan National Conservation Strategy; and
- The Seychelles National Development and Environmental Management Plans.

These plans shared several common and crucial features:

- All involved, or were linked to, multistakeholder processes;
- All involved periodic public meetings and reporting;
- All used local expertise, with few or no outside advisers or consultants; and
- All priorities, targets, and timetables were set by domestic decision-makers.

These features should be maintained in other countries when they prepare new national or local plans for sustainable development linked to Agenda 21.

Planning must be accompanied by institutional change and innovation. All key economic and sectoral agencies must be made fully accountable and responsible for ensuring that their policies, programs, and budgets support development that is economically and ecologically sustainable. Environmental agencies must also be strengthened because too often they have authority but little or no power.

Plans must apply to more than government programs, and they must engage all sectors and key members of the community. Many national plans have not been implemented because of their failure to involve key stakeholders in their preparation or to involve the community on a continuous basis in their implementation and modification. National plans must also take into account regional and global implications and impacts. Plans must be constantly monitored and updated in response to new information and circumstances.

Technical assistance and aid should reinforce these features and the domestic capacity to prepare and implement national and local plans for sustainable development. External assistance should particularly avoid over-loading, displacing, or preempting domestic planning and decision-making.

Theme IV: Decision-making for Sustainable Development

Financial accountability in government is monitored and improved by the Auditor-General. A similar function is needed to monitor and assess progress toward sustainable development. A commissioner of sustainability could report on, for example, the costs of taking or postponing environmental protection measures.

Government agencies should increasingly be required to report regularly on the extent to which their policies and programs have increased, maintained, or diminished the environment and the natural resource base. These environmental audits and sustainability reports should be tied to, and submitted with, their annual budget estimates and requests. Environmental assessments should be mandatory for all major new policies, programs, and projects likely to have a significant impact on the environment. Research programs and results are sometimes misleading or irrelevant unless they consider and integrate indigenous

knowledge, approaches, and values. Decision-making can be seriously flawed if based only on conventional research.

Government should engage in multistakeholder approaches only if they are prepared to do so on a continuous basis. Periodic consultations at the discretion of governments are no longer sufficient. All partners who are invited and accept to participate in multistakeholder processes must be prepared to share their information, views, and even decision-making powers. This is especially true of governments and industry.

The commitment and full support of Chief Executive Officers is crucial to improve the environmental performance of corporations and to ensure effective participation and follow-up for multistakeholder processes. Industry, however, has frequently responded much faster than government to new proposals and initiatives.

Decision-makers in developing countries face the far more complicated task of making difficult choices and trade-offs between short- and long-term benefits and risks because the lives and livelihoods of many of their people are already under serious threat from poverty, hunger, and a backlog of environmental degradation. There is a need to strengthen the participation and the capacity of key stakeholder organizations outside government, especially NGOs and independent research institutions. However, it is sometimes difficult to engage industry in multistakeholder processes in developing countries because they already have well-established and effective routes for reaching decision-makers.

Multistakeholder processes also provide decision-makers in government with an opportunity to reach and influence many key industry and NGO leaders who can in turn help influence other Ministries and agencies. These processes also provide the possibility of generating and pretesting policy changes and new program initiatives.

Appendix 1
Speakers and Commentators

Theme I: Multistakeholder Partnerships

Moderator	Arthur Campeau
Speakers	Pierre-Marc Johnson, National and Provincial Roundtables
	Elizabeth May, Forestry Sector Dialogue
	Robert Paehlke, Municipal Roundtables
Commentators	Michael Okeyo
	Erna Witoelar

Theme II: Decision-making Tools

Moderator	Johan Holmberg
Speakers	Tony Cassils, Economic Instruments and Full-cost Pricing
	Ron Doering, Role of Environmental Regulation
	John Girt, Identifying Perverse Subsidies
	Tony Hodge, Reporting and Indicators
Commentator	Tichafa Mundangepfupfu

Theme III: Multistakeholder Planning

Moderator	Mohamed Sahnoun
Speakers	Jeremy Carew-Reid and Aban Marker Kabraji, Relevant Experience in the South
	Jim MacNeill, Relevant Experience in the North
	Peter Padbury, Projet de Société
	Bob Slater, The Canadian GreenPlan
Commentators	Maria Arienza de Mallmann
	Bertrand Rassool

Theme IV: Decision-making for Sustainable Development

Moderator	David Runnalls
Speakers	Tanner Elton, Reorganizing Government for Sustainable Development
	Jon Grant, Corporate Decision-making
	Tony Penikett, Cabinet-level Decision-making
Commentators	Bakary Kante
	Rajendra Pachauri

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Through support for research, Canada's **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** assists scientists in developing countries to identify long-term, workable solutions to pressing development problems. Support is given directly to scientists working in universities, private enterprise, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Priority is given to research aimed at achieving equitable and sustainable development worldwide. Projects are designed to maximize the use of local materials and to strengthen human and institutional capacity.

Led by the dedication and innovative approach of Third World scientists — often in collaboration with Canadian partners — IDRC-supported research is using science and technology to respond to a wide range of complex issues in the developing world.

IDRC is directed by an international Board of Governors and is funded by the Government of Canada. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), IDRC's mandate was broadened to emphasize sustainable development issues. IDRC's international network and expertise will be used to help the world move toward implementation of UNCED's Agenda 21 program of action.

Le Centre de recherches pour le développement international (CRDI) soutient des travaux et des activités de recherche dans les pays en développement de manière à assurer un développement durable et équitable à l'échelle mondiale.

Les recherches sont menées par des scientifiques affiliés à des institutions, à des entreprises, à des gouvernements ou à des organismes de développement. Des partenaires canadiens y contribuent régulièrement.

Les projets soutenus financièrement ou techniquement par le CRDI privilégient le recours aux ressources locales et s'appuient sur le génie, l'intelligence et le sens de l'innovation des chercheurs des pays en développement.

Le CRDI contribue au renforcement des connaissances et des capacités de recherche des pays en développement pour lutter contre la pauvreté et pour améliorer les conditions de vie et l'environnement des populations affectées.

Le CRDI est dirigé par un Conseil des gouverneurs international. Ses fonds proviennent du gouvernement du Canada. La Conférence des Nations unies sur l'environnement et le développement (CNUED) a choisi le CRDI pour participer à la mise en oeuvre du développement durable à l'échelle planétaire. Le CRDI verra à concrétiser le programme Action 21 élaboré lors du Sommet de la Terre.

Con el fin de asegurar un desarrollo sostenible y equitativo a escala mundial, **el Centro Internacional de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo (CIID)** financía trabajos y actividades de investigación en los países en desarrollo. Las investigaciones están a cargo de científicos que trabajan en instituciones, empresas, gobiernos u organismos dedicados al desarrollo. Estos científicos reciben regularmente la colaboración de sus colegas canadienses.

Los proyectos apoyados financiera o técnicamente por el CIID favorecen el uso de recursos locales y se apoyan en el talento, la inteligencia y el sentido de innovación de los investigadores de los países en desarrollo.

El CIID contribuye al fortalecimiento de los conocimientos y a la capacidad investigativa de los países en desarrollo para luchar contra la pobreza y mejorar las condiciones de vida y el medio ambiente de las poblaciones afectadas.

Un Consejo de Gobernadores Internacional tiene a su cargo la dirección del CIID, cuyos fondos provienen del Gobierno de Canadá. La Conferencia de Naciones Unidas sobre el Medio Ambiente y el Desarrollo (CNUED) ha seleccionado al CIID para participar en la realización del desarrollo sostenible a escala mundial. El CIID se encargará de hacer realidad el programa Agenda 21, elaborado durante la Cumbre de la Tierra.

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